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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout was created by the state Legislature in 1983 to develop a strategy for the conservation and restoration of salmon and steelhead trout resources in California. The Advisory Committee is patterned after a similar citizens' committee appointed 18 years ago. That group contributed substantially to the protection of the state's fish life. The present Advisory Committee consists of 11 members and their working alternates, representing the commercial fisheries, sportfishing organizations, fisheries science, Native Americans and the general public.

To streamline its investigations, the Advisory Committee divided the state's "salmon and steelhead country"—the Central Valley and the coastal streams, from Oregon to Los Angeles—into 11 stream-group regions. It then enlisted literally hundreds of knowledgeable Californians to help identify salmon and steelhead conservation problems and restoration opportunities, watershed by watershed. Advisory Committee members researched conservation laws, water use policies, principles of conservation economics, hatchery practices, genetic preservation issues and the need for research, information and conservation education programs. Close scrutiny of the state's natural salmon and steelhead stocks confirmed that spawning runs have declined significantly in all California streams during the last 30 years; spawning runs have disappeared completely

from many. Not surprisingly, the reduction in spawning runs has yielded lower fish populations, despite the contribution made by hatchery stocks. The state's average annual king salmon population—the number of adults caught both at sea and in rivers, plus the number that escape to their home streams to spawn—has declined to only one million fish. Adult steelhead trout number less than 250,000. Silver salmon have plummeted to 100,000 adults.

This trend of decline is the cumulative result of nearly a century of water and land use practices and policies that have favored development of other natural resources over the conservation of fish. The complex ecological balance in each creek and stream, wrought by nature over the ages, was recklessly disrupted when dams were constructed, forests logged, and mountains moved in the name of progress. Salmon and steelhead trout populations, which were once so abundant, must now be nurtured and the natural balance must be restored.

A deepening concern for the environment has awakened new attitudes about stewardship of the state's salmon and steelhead trout resources. This, combined with broader economic approaches and successful restoration techniques, offers solid hope that the natural balance vital to salmon and steelhead survival can be restored. Recent projections are that the state's present salmon and steel-

***'A reasonable goal would be to double statewide production by 2010... This doubling would strengthen the state's economy by generating 85000 new jobs and increasing business revenues by \$150 million a year.'***

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***"In most [water] project decision-making, no economic values have been given to downstream fish life..."***

head stocks can be doubled within 20 years. This doubling would yield a statewide benefit of \$150 million a year and, overall, would be worth \$6 billion to California citizens and businesses.

To accomplish this, vigorous efforts must be made to address key problems destroying the fisheries. This will involve a focused, well-managed program of habitat protection and repair. It will require changes in water allocation policies and practices so that adequate stream flow and appropriate water temperatures are provided for salmon and steelhead trout during critical times of year. And it will rely on innovative education programs that inspire a populace to be aware, to care.

The Advisory Committee offers more than 100 findings and recommendations in this report aimed at rebuilding salmon and steelhead stocks. Of these, the following recommendations are of major consequence and are central to the restoration program:

- The Legislature should declare it to be the policy of the state to double California's salmon and steelhead trout resources. It should direct the Department of Fish and Game to prepare a detailed program, including funding needs, staffing requirements and the changes in law necessary to achieve the policy.

(See Senate Bill 2261, page 53.)

- The Legislature should amend the state's Forest Practice Act to give greater emphasis to the protection of water quality and other factors necessary for salmon and steelhead survival.

(See Senate Bill 1335, page 57.)

- The Legislature's Joint Fisheries and Aquaculture Committee should inform the State Water Resources Control Board that the present streamflow allocated by law for

the survival of juvenile salmon migrating through the Sacramento-San Joaquin rivers Delta is inadequate. Adequate streamflow for salmon survival must be allocated in the Board's 1990 Bay-Delta water quality plan and water rights decision.

- The Legislature should memorialize Congress to instruct the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to suspend its present Central Valley Project water marketing program until the State Water Resources Control Board has adopted improved water quality standards for the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary. Without this new standard, it is uncertain how much, if any, additional water can be removed from the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers without doing irreversible harm to fishlife.

(See Senate Joint Resolution 43, page 58.)

- The Department of Fish and Game should step up its enforcement of state laws that require stream diversion owners to construct and maintain fish screens. The loss of juvenile salmon and steelhead to unscreened and inadequately screened diversions has become intolerable; changes must be made to improve the enforceability of screen law provisions.

(See Senate Bill 2390, page 56.)

These recommendations are the heart of a recovery program that *will* work. Salmon and steelhead trout are among California's most precious natural treasures. They are a challenging and exhilarating gamefish. They are a popular and nourishing source of food. They are a vital link in a finely-tuned ecosystem. And, because of their well-known life requirements, they are also an excellent gauge by which to measure the successful stewardship of California's natural resources legacy.